

# Below Grand

## *Persiana Americana*

Astrid Dick, Yasue Maetake, Armita Raafat

Curated by Amanda Millet-Sorsa

June 24 - July 29, 2023

Opening Saturday June 24, 2023 from 5-7pm



Astrid Dick, *Persiana Americana (Pornografia)*, 2022, oil on canvas, 84 x 70 in.

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Persiana Americana, is what in Argentine Spanish is the Venetian blind—an accordion on your window where the horizontal slats bring in and also obscure light, separating interior space from the sun. What do Venetians call these blinds? *Persianes*. And in French, *persiennes*. It seems Venetian merchants, early on, brought these blinds from Persia, leaving us a trace of the pathways of trade, through time and place.

A fragmented body,  
mirroring the selfless sky,  
or displaced pieces of a history  
in resonance with the waves of a memory  
that once left that body  
to an unpronounced space.

—Mohsen Emadi (2023)

It is a blur whether a mirror was in fact invented in Venice in 1255 with glass, or if earlier versions with metal alloys of bronze and copper found themselves in ancient Greece around 4000 BCE or the Quija culture in Northern China around 2000 BCE.

Recognizing one's self in a reflection is the beginning of self-awareness, for an infant.

An 11 year old girl in Argentina, writes in her diary (translated from Spanish):

*"My room has its walls pink with little pictures, and a mirror on which is painted a girl. There is the desk from which I sit to observe a pretty landscape on rainy days and also where I do my homework from school. There are shelves with little dolls and books and a window that almost takes up the whole wall and that is covered with a venetian blind, what a nice room no?"*

Narcissus falls in love with his own reflection in a pool of water. At the end of his life he falls into the pond and out blooms a Narcissus flower. During the rainy season, in Japan, the white flower of the Sal tree (sarasoju) blooms, its life is brief.

Behind a slatted window made of bamboo, late in the day with long vertical shadows on the floor, a sculptor reads "The Tale of Heike" (1317): *"The proud do not endure, they are like a dream on a spring night; the mighty fall at last, they are as dust before the wind."*

Millenniums-old silk is tied around a branch form in multiples. Shintosim. Verdigris Turquoise-green. Copper erodes and disintegrates. Impermanence. How to repurpose industrial waste?

A sculptor reflects, *"I see ruthless cruelty in the materialism of society, so instead, I argue for the value in a long-term view of conscious and responsible interaction with the natural world, stemming from the Japanese notion that spirits inhabit each piece of metal, the natural fabric, and forever on."*

Disco. Ultramarine Blue. Rebirth.

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**Astrid Dick** is a painter from Buenos Aires, Argentina, currently based in Paris. In 2002, she was awarded a Ph.D. in economics from MIT. Having led a double-life between art and economic research for many years, at age 36 she abandons her post as university professor to devote herself entirely to art. She was artist-in-residence at the Atlantic Center for the Arts, the Vermont Studio Center, the Leipzig Spinnerei, and Yaddo. Her work has been shown at the Grand Palais in Paris, the Manoir de la Ville de Martigny, Switzerland, MDavid & Co. gallery in Brooklyn, and Johnson Lowe gallery in Atlanta, among others. Recently, she published the zine “A True History of Stripes,” and her work was reviewed by John Yau in Hyperallergic.

**Yasue Maetake** was trained in glass art in Japan and the Czech Republic before moving to New York. Her work has been exhibited in the US and abroad including 10th Sonsbeek in the Netherlands, and more recently, at the 58th Venice Biennale at the Palazzo Benzon. Other institutional exhibitions include at Espacio 1414-The Berezdivin Collection, Puerto Rico; Queens Art Museum Biennale, Kimball Art Center, UT; Taiwan Design Expo '22, and forthcoming at ASU Art Museum, AZ in this fall. Maetake was a recipient of New York State Council on the Arts, NYFA Fellowship in Sculpture, and artist residency in the studio of El Anatsui in Ghana/Nigeria sponsored by the Agency for Japanese Cultural Affairs. She earned her MFA from Columbia University in New York.

**Armita Raafat** is a New York-based sculptor and installation artist. She was born in Chicago and raised in Tehran. Raafat earned her BFA from Al-Zahra University in Tehran and MFA from the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She has exhibited at the MCA in Chicago, the Bronx Museum of the Arts, the Noyes Museum of Art, the Children's Museum of Manhattan, Pavel Zoubok Gallery, Dorsky Gallery, Art in Buildings, HORSEANDPONY Fine Arts in Berlin, and Al-Zahra University in Tehran, among others. Raafat received the Peter S. Reed Foundation grant for Sculpture and a NYFA fellowship for Crafts/Sculpture. She has been in residence at LMCC Swing Space, AIM at the Bronx Museum of the Arts, Winter Workspace at Wave Hill, and Workspace Program at Dieu Donne. Her studio is located at the Elizabeth Foundation for the Arts.